

# URGENT ACTION

## IMPRISONED JOURNALIST MUST BE RELEASED

**Stanislav Aseev, a freelance journalist, who was missing for several weeks, is held by the Russia-backed separatists from the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” (“DNR”) in eastern Ukraine. They accuse him of “espionage”.**

Freelance journalist **Stanislav Aseev** has been held in incommunicado detention by the pro-Russian separatists from the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” (“DNR”) in eastern Ukraine, since 2 June. Initially, the de facto DNR authorities denied knowing his fate and whereabouts.

On 16 July, an agent of the de facto DNR’s “Ministry of State Security” (MGB) confirmed to Stanislav Aseev’s mother that her son was in their custody. He informed her that the MGB suspected Aseev of “espionage”, an accusation which appears to be related to Stanislav Aseev’s reporting from Donetsk as an undercover journalist. No pro-Ukrainian or independent media are allowed to report from DNR-controlled territory.

The mother of Stanislav Aseev was able to meet him once, for just 10 minutes, in the presence of agents of the MGB. She is gravely concerned about his safety and well-being. At the time of writing, Stanislav Aseev remains under “investigation” by the MGB.

### 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Demanding that Stanislav Aseev is immediately released;
- Urging that he, and any other journalist, is able to carry out legitimate journalist activities without interference, including when travelling in and out of the territories affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine;
- Reminding them that under international humanitarian law, which is binding on all parties in conflict, arbitrary, abusive and prolonged detention of civilians is prohibited

**Contact these two officials by 1 September, 2017:**

Head of the DNR  
Aleksandr Zakharchenko  
Donetsk, Ukraine  
Email: [op@dnr-sovet.su](mailto:op@dnr-sovet.su)  
Salutation: Dear Mr. Zakharchenko

Ambassador Valeriy Chaly, Embassy of Ukraine  
3350 M St NW, Washington DC 20007  
Phone: 1 202 349 2963; Fax: 1 202 333 0817  
Email: [emb\\_us@mfa.gov.ua](mailto:emb_us@mfa.gov.ua)  
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

### 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 160.17*

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**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Stanislav Aseev is a freelance journalist in the separatist-controlled Donetsk who, until his captivity on 2 June, was working under a pseudonym, reporting about daily life in the self-styled “Donetsk People’s Republic” (“DNR”).

On 3 June, as they could not find Stanislav Aseev and there were no answers from his phone, his family went to look for him at the flat where he lives. Despite waiting there for hours there was no sign of him. Increasingly concerned, his family returned to the flat on 4 June, with his landlord. When they opened the door they saw clear signs that the flat had been searched.

Stanislav Aseev’s family has appealed to the de facto DNR authorities, including the local police and the body known as the “Ministry of State Security” (MGB), regarding his whereabouts. As yet, they have not received a response. They have also visited two detention centres in Donetsk, but were not able to find him.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine began in the first months of 2014, after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation. In April and May 2014, opponents of the new Kyiv government occupied buildings belonging to the local administrations and law enforcement agencies in several towns in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions of eastern Ukraine (Donbass). Demanding increased local autonomy or independence from Ukraine, and closer ties with Russia, protest organizers formed armed groups, backed by the Russian Federation, and proclaimed the creation of the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic”. In response, the authorities in Kyiv launched what they characterized as a “counter terrorist operation” (antiteroristichna operatsiya – ATO) aimed at retaking control of the area.

In the self-proclaimed “republics”, local security services operate with no checks and balances, detain individuals arbitrarily and hold them in their own detention facilities. Often, detainees are subjected to 30 days of “administrative detention” during which they have no access to the outside world. Amnesty International and other organizations monitoring human rights have also documented cases when such detainees are tortured and ill-treated in order to extract a forced “confession”, which is then used by a de facto court for conviction. For more details about such practices, please see the joint report by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch *You Don’t Exist: Arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and torture in eastern Ukraine*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/4455/2016/en/>

The de facto DNR does not have properly constituted courts which meet international law and standards. Article 321 of its “Criminal Code”, which deals with “espionage”, carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison or, in war time, death. Under international humanitarian law, the passing of sentences and carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court which complies with international law and standards on fair trial is a war crime.

Name: Stanislav Aseev

Gender m/f: m